

Dunsop Bridge

From Bentham, the obvious route to Dunsop Bridge is via Slaidburn, and then Newton. If you are travelling from elsewhere then the postcode for the (recommended) Puddleducks Tea Rooms (<https://puddleduckstearooms.com/>) in the centre of the village is BB7 3BB. If you prefer what-3-words as a navigational tool, then the tag is **island.herring.evolution**, whilst the OS grid reference is SD66035007. There is a car park, with toilets, in the centre of the village - or if you prefer there is limited roadside parking – but as ever, please be considerate to residents.

From the village green, and with your back to the river, you will see the tea rooms opposite and Dunsop Bridge just to your left. We head out on the marked path, initially following the right hand bank of the Dunsop, and passing a well maintained children's play area before we head out into more open land.

We pass a barn on the left and head toward a cluster of buildings straight ahead – we are still on a level, metalled path at this stage, although Staple Oak Fell looms over us on the left, reminding us that sooner or later we will need to work a little harder. The path continues around the left of the buildings and then heads into woodland. At this point, we need to look out for the path exiting the lane on the right to take us uphill toward Beatrix. The track we started on continues as a right of way crossing the Dunsop, so if you find yourself at a river crossing, you have missed the path to Beatrix and need to reverse a little.

Our path now heads through the woods and then emerges back into open land heading uphill – note that the OS map shows the path going slightly to the left across the fields, whilst the route on our GPX keeps us at the field edge - both work, but our version is easier walking and more considerate to the farmer. We soon arrive at a metal gate onto a tarmac lane where we turn left and head up to Beatrix: We first arrive at Lower Beatrix, and see Beatrix Fell ahead and to the left of the road. We continue on the road which curves round to Higher Beatrix where we walk to the left of the farmhouse and then head out along a clear path toward an old barn known as Back of Hill Barn. As we head that way, we get great views to the South toward Birkett Fell.

Beyond the barn, the path heads Northeast, and gently down to the corner of a field where we cross Rough Syke before starting a steep, but reasonably well surfaced climb up the opposite side of the valley at the bottom of Oxenhurst Clough.

We see another derelict barn ahead (Rough Syke Barn) and we use that as our next landmark. We pass to the left of the barn, and then need to take care, because the path forks. Our route is to the right heading uphill, the less used path to the left follows the contours and heads to Brunghill Moor where it eventually meets a minor road. Our route also meets that road – but further down, so if you take the wrong route here, or simply fancy extending the walk, then all is well – just remember to go right when you get to the metaled road.

From the point where the path forks, we keep right and follow the path round the edge of fields until we arrive at a gate into an old green lane referred to on the OS map as Bull Lane – we follow the lane until it meets a minor road where we turn right. The road is very quiet, but care is still need as we head southeast toward Newton. No more than 120m from the junction of the road and Bull Lane we cross the route of a Roman road – though its not particularly obvious. This heads North to Low Bentham and then through to Cowan Bridge.

We follow the road down to Newton - we turn right in the village and head down to the road bridge over the river Hodder; just beyond, and on the right, we cross into fields which run along the banks of the river – this is a great spot to take lunch - if you are lucky you will see kingfishers darting up and down the river.

We are now on the Ribble Valley Jubilee Trail, a relatively new 65 mile trail divided into seven sections and created as part of the Borough's Jubilee celebrations. Our return journey is initially along the riverbank – the route is clear, but as the river starts to bend right at Barge Ford, we need to head diagonally left to cross fields and pick up a minor road at Foulscals.

We head right along the road for a short while until we see a private road heading down to Knowlmore Manor. This is on the right, and although the road is private, there is a public footpath along the line of the path – you are not trespassing.

As we progress down the track to the manor house, you will see a couple of footpaths leading off the drive on the right. These go to a footbridge over the Hodder, which from the vantage point of this walk appeared to be unsafe for use.

We follow the track down to Giddy Bridge – which despite the name is robust – and then into the parkland in front of the manor house.

We carry on past the manor house and take the left fork to follow the track along the side of the Hodder Valley. Opposite we have a good view of the Sugar Loaf hill, a limestone knoll which has been quarried for the lime kiln below. It is said that at one time a gibbet stood on its summit.

Also in view here is a precarious looking pedestrian suspension bridge over the Hodder – not part of our route – and then an aqueduct that carries drinking water. Thankfully for the residents of Blackburn, which it supplies, this looks to be better maintained.

Just after our closest approach to the aqueduct, we look for a stile on the right hand side of the lane, and cross the drystone wall to head diagonally downhill – at the bottom right hand corner of the field we cross into a meadow at the side of the Hodder, and then take a path along the right hand side of workshops before the view opens up and we see Thorneyholme Hall along with the otter sculptures which grace the front garden.

To finish the walk, we cross the access bridge and stroll down the drive back to the road where we turn left, to return to Dunsop Bridge.

- **Total distance 12.3 km (7.6 miles)**
- **Total ascent 234 m**
- **Moderate walk**